CJP reviews solarisation of district courts

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: Chief Justice of Pakistan Yahya Afridi on Saturday appreciated Punjab government's commitment to ensure uninterrupted power supply to district courts across the province.

The chief justice chaired a high-level meeting in Lahore to advance judicial infrastructure reforms, with a particular focus on securing sustainable and uninterrupted power supply for district courts across Punjab, said a statement.

The meeting was attended by the Lahore High Court Chief Justice Aalia Neelum, Chief Secretary Zahid Akhtar Zaman, the secretaries for the departments of finance, energy and social welfare.

The agenda of the meeting centered on the government funding and policy support for the solarisation of district courts to ensure continuity of judicial services, especially in areas vulnerable to power disruptions.

During the meeting, the chief secretary gave firm assurance that the provincial government would ensure uninterrupted electricity supply to the courts across the province.

Where power supply cannot be reliably guaranteed, the government committed to provide solar energy solutions, latest by Aug 31, 2026 to maintain seamless court operations.

CJP Afridi appreciated the Punjab government's proactive approach and strong commitment, noting that reliable energy infrastructure is essential for timely justice delivery, institutional efficiency and public confidence in the justice system.

He observed that the proposed measures would not only enhance court functionality but would also contribute to sustainability, resilience, and long-term cost efficiency.

The meeting concluded with a shared resolve to translate these commitments into swift implementation, reinforcing access to justice and strengthening institutional governance across Punjab.

17 booked for attack on Waqas Akram's brother

By Our Correspondent

TOBA TEK SINGH: The Jhang City Police on Saturday booked 17 people for the alleged attack on Sheikh Fawad Akram, the brother of PTI MNA and Central Information Secretary Sheikh Waqas Akram, and killing one employee and injuring three guards a day earlier.

The police had arrested Sheikh Sheraz Akram, the stepbrother of Waqas and Fawad Akram, along with three accomplices after the incident on Friday evening, while raids were being conducted to arrest the other accused.

Complainant Fawad claimed in his FIR that accused Sheraz and his accomplices opened fire on two vehicles of his convoy resulting in the death of his employee Mohsin and three guards getting injured.

He further claimed in the FIR that Jhang Gymkhana Club Secretary Dr Muzzam Waheed, who had announced to contest election against Sheikh Waqas group, was the mastermind behind the attack.

Meanwhile, in a statement earlier on Friday evening, Sheikh Waqas Akram called the attack cowardly and demanded justice.

LAHORE: A large number of birds perched on electricity wires on a foggy Saturday. — White Star

Ongoing Ichhra Bazaar revamp to complete by mid-May

2,000 feet area of the bazaar, having 300 shops, being revitalised with Rs662m

By Khalid Hasnain

LAHORE: In a bid to eliminate congestion, ease shoppers' mobility and resolve various other civic issues, the pace of civil work on the Ichhra Bazaar revamp project has been accelerated to complete it by mid-May.

The Rs662.3m project, titled "Revitalisation of Ichhra Bazaar" has been funded by the Metropolitan Corporation Lahore (MCL) whereas it is being executed by the Lahore Development Authority (LDA).

Started in the mid of last month, the project will be completed within a period of five months. The area being revitalised consists of around 2,000 feet, including 1,600 feet of main Ichhra Bazaar and 400 feet area along the Ferozepur Road. The number of total shops in the bazaar is about 300.

"At present, the excavation work in a 300 feet area has been completed. Similarly, the PCC (plain cement concrete) base work has also been completed in 300 feet stretch has also been completed whereas the placement of conduit pipes is in progress these days," Mazhar Ali Khan, the LDA Urban Development Wing's chief engineer, explained while talking to *Dawn*.

"Keeping in view the local problems, we have accelerated the pace of work by deploying/mobilizing more labour and machinery at the site to carry out civil works round the clock."

Mr Khan said that in the washroom block, 80pc dismantling work had been completed whereas for facade improvement, the installation of facade moldings had commenced on identified shops and buildings. For louvers installation, the sample is ready to be fixed. Similarly, the design of entry gate has been finalised and its execution will be started after laying of conduit.

According to a document, the scope of the project includes construction of grand cutting-edge designed entrance blended with cultural traditions, facade uplift through provision of vertical louvres for first floor (100 feet height), application of a durable, textured wall coating (rock shield or equivalent) and weather shield paint for end and subsequent floors, uniformity of shops through consistent shutter and signage designs having architectural columns, uniform paint, height etc, provision of horizontal louvres and shop banner (signage boards with laser-cut 3D acrylic alphabets), CNC-cut decorative grill for electric fixtures (Lesco poles & transformers), road/street signage and soft landscaping works at main entrance and renovation of existing washroom blocks.

To restrict vehicular movement and prioritise safe, accessible and pedestrian-friendly streets, the works related to patterned cobblestones, concrete boulders at certain locations, installation of rumble strips/tactile tiles for visually-impaired persons and porcelain tiles for side pathways with wheelchair ramps at certain locations will also be carried out.

The scope of work also includes underground network of electricity to ensure a clutter-free streetscape, improved safety and utility management following provisions to be taken into consideration such as embedded conduit under side walkways with provision for Lesco, PTCL and other utility lines, installation of cable trays for utility management at upper floors, floor/pole mounted electric panel/meter boards encasing shop Lesco connection meters with earthing bores amid copper conductor for earthing, shifting/installation of new Lesco poles with foundations, fixtures, conductors, circuit breakers etc.

"Since Ichhra bazaar is one of Lahore's oldest and busiest traditional markets and known for affordable shopping and cultural vibrancy, its revamp is a need of the hour," the chief engineer said, claiming that the project completion would help control overcrowding, eliminating haphazard facade and traffic congestion on the Ferozepur Road.

Woman mauled to death, minor boy injured by stray dogs

By Our Correspondent

BAHAWALPUR: A woman was mauled to death while a minor seminary boy suffered serious wounds by a pack of dogs in two separate incidents in Vehari and Lodhran districts, respectively.

According to Mailsi police of district Lodhran, Naziran Mai (60), a resident of Basti Nealanwali in the suburbs of Dakotal town, had gone to hospital to meet her ailing daughter. On her way back to her house, she was attacked by a pack of 15 stray dogs. They mauled her as they continuously attacked her, resulting in her death on the spot.

On receiving the news, Mailsi Assistant Commissioner Saad Bin Khalid, accompanied by DSP Chaudhry Saeed Sial, reached the scene. Naziran's family refused to shift her body to hospital for a post-mortem and took their house for her burial. They did not register the complaint. However, after the incident, the AC Mailsi asked the municipal committee to launch an operation against stray dogs.

In the second incident, a six-year-old boy Zohaib was coming back from his seminary. He was attacked by stray dogs. He suffered serious sounds on his head and legs. He was rushed to the THQ Hospital Kahrore Pucca.

BODY FOUND: An aged housewife was found allegedly murdered under mysterious circumstances and her body was recovered while floating in a canal near Ahmedpur East.

According to City Police Ahmedpur East, Syed Riaz Hussain had registered an abduction case, saying his wife Irshad (Bibi (50) had gone to the bazaar but did not return. On Saturday, police found a woman's body floating in a nearby canal. It was identified as Irshad Bibi's body. Police told Dawn that a suspect was held for interrogation.

MURDER: Five suspects allegedly tortured to death a prominent Christian faith-healer and injured two over a dispute between the two rival groups at Chak 187 /EB in the suburb of Vehari.

According to Saddar police, there was a dispute between faith-healer Baba Sultan Masih's nephew Ashfaq Masih and local resident Nawaz Masih. On hearing screams and noise during their fight in the street, Baba Sultan Masih and his brother Ijaz Masih rushed outside. At this, five suspects, identified as Anwar Masih, Irfan Masih, Rashid alias Kakoo, Nadeem and Samuel Masih, who were armed with clubs and bricks, allegedly started torturing Baba Sultan and others. Baba Sultan died of torture at the spot while his two relatives, Nihal Masih and Baharish Masih, suffered serious injuries . On receipt of information, the police shifted the dead and injured to hospital. A case was registered against five nominated suspects.

Concern at LHC's delay in Nasser Bagh case as construction goes on

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: The civil society has expressed its concern over a delay in the hearing of a petition challenging the construction of an underground parking plaza at Nasser Bagh.

The petition, titled Imrana Tiwana and Others versus Government of Punjab (W.P. 77360/2025), was filed on Dec 24, 2025 seeking an interim stay against the parking plaza project and questioning its legality.

The petition contends that construction activities are continuing and have resulted in the cutting of trees, damage to biodiversity and the natural water aquifer, and violations of environmental safeguards, says a joint statement.

Several organisations and individuals including the Lahore Conservation Society, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Ravi Bachao Tehreek, WWF Pakistan, Institute of Architects Pakistan, and environmentalists, architects, academics and civil society members signed the statement.

It says on the day of filing, LHC judge, Justice Sultan Tanvir Ahmad, acknowledged the urgency of the matter and ordered that the petition be listed before Justice Shahid Karim, already seized with an environmental and public interest litigation related to the Nasser Bagh project. However, according to the statement, the case was not nominated before Justice Karim. Hearings scheduled for Dec 26, 29, 30 and 31 were either cancelled or rescheduled.

With the start of winter holidays in the LHC, the petition has not been fixed for hearing while construction work continues at the site, the statement adds. It maintains that the delay has effectively deprived the petitioners of urgent judicial relief and allowed the continuation of the project before the court could examine its legality.

The signatories argue that the alleged environmental damage violates fundamental rights guaranteed under Articles 4, 9, 9A and 14 of the Constitution, including the right to life, clean air and environmental protection.

They have called upon Lahore High Court Chief Justice Aalia Neelum to take notice of the matter and ensure that the petition is heard without further delay.

Martial rule, agrarian militarisation and political centrality of Punjab

By Tahir Kamran

THE concept of "martial rule" and the associated ideology of the "martial races" occupy a central place in the colonial and post-colonial history of Punjab. Far from being a mere military recruitment strategy, this theory evolved into a durable socio-political framework that reshaped agrarian relations, state power, and political authority in the region.

Drawing upon the works of scholars such as Mustafa Kamal Pasha, Clive Dewey, Tan Tai Yong, and Rajit Mazumdar, one can trace how martial rule developed as an intellectual and administrative project, how it became deeply embedded in the agrarian economy of Punjab, and how its long-term ramifications elevated the military to a decisive force in contemporary politics.

The theory of martial rule emerged from the broader colonial construct of the "martial races," formulated by British administrators in the aftermath of the Indian Rebellion of 1857. As Tan Tai Yong demonstrates, the rebellion marked a decisive rupture in British perceptions of loyalty and governance in India. Communities that had resisted colonial authority, particularly in Bengal and Awadh, were increasingly viewed as politically unreliable, while populations from the north-western frontier, most notably the Punjab, were re-imagined as inherently loyal, hardy, and martial. This reclassification was not merely descriptive but prescriptive, guiding recruitment policies and administrative priorities in the decades that followed.

Clive Dewey locates the intellectual foundations of this theory in Victorian ethnographic and racial assumptions. Punjabi peasants, especially Jats, Sikhs, and Muslim Rajputs, were portrayed as physically robust, morally disciplined, and socially cohesive, qualities believed to arise from their rural environment and agrarian way of life. These characteristics were contrasted with what colonial discourse described as the effeminacy and political volatility of urban and eastern Indian populations. Although no single individual can be identified as the sole originator of the martial races theory, British military and administrative figures such as Sir Frederick Roberts (1832-1914) and Lord Horatio Herbert Kitchener (1850-1916) played a crucial role in institutionalising it within the recruitment and organisation of the colonial army by the late 19th century.

Mustafa Kamal Pasha advances this argument further by emphasising that martial rule was not simply an ideology of recruitment but a broader mode of governance. In this framework, military loyalty came to substitute for political participation as the primary basis of state legitimacy. Particularly in strategically sensitive regions like Punjab, the colonial state privileged military-administrative control over representative institutions, thereby embedding coercive authority within everyday governance. Martial rule thus functioned as a political logic that disciplined society while simultaneously rewarding loyalty through material and symbolic incentives.

The centrality of the Punjab to the colonial military project cannot be understood without reference to its agrarian restructuring. As Rajit Mazumdar argues, British rule deliberately fused landownership, military service, and political authority into a single, mutually reinforcing system. Through canal colonisation schemes in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, vast areas of irrigated land were allocated preferentially to serving soldiers and military pensioners. Access to land became both a reward for service and a mechanism for securing long-term loyalty to the colonial state.

Clive Dewey's analysis of Punjab land policy reveals how this arrangement produced a military–agrarian complex in which economic stability and political conservatism were closely aligned. Military service offered regular wages, pensions, and social prestige, while landownership anchored soldiers and veterans within the rural order. The figure of the soldier-peasant emerged as the ideal colonial subject productive in peace, dependable in war, and resistant to political mobilisation. This system also reshaped village hierarchies, privileging military families and reinforcing patriarchal and martial values within rural society.

Tan Tai Yong further observes that this fusion of military recruitment and agrarian economy insulated large parts of rural Punjab from the nationalist movements that gained traction elsewhere in India. The army acted as a social safety valve by absorbing surplus male labour and reducing pressures that might otherwise have produced agrarian unrest. As a result, the military became deeply embedded in everyday village life, influencing patterns of authority, masculinity, and social status in ways that endured beyond the colonial period.

The long-term consequences of this militarised agrarian order were profound and far-reaching. Mustafa Kamal Pasha argues that colonial martial rule laid the structural foundations for post-colonial military dominance, particularly in Pakistan. At the moment of independence in 1947, Punjab especially West Punjab supplied a disproportionately large share of soldiers, officers, and bureaucratic elites to the new state. This imbalance translated into enduring institutional advantages for the military within the post-colonial political order.

The inherited nexus between land, arms, and authority facilitated the political ascendancy of large landowning families with military backgrounds, who came to dominate provincial and national politics. As Mazumdar notes, the military's claim to political legitimacy rested not only on its coercive power but also on its deep social roots in rural Punjab, where military service was normalised and valourised across generations. This social embeddedness distinguished the military from other state institutions and enhanced its capacity to intervene in political life.

In contemporary times, this historical legacy has made the military a decisive political actor. The Punjab's continued over-representation within the armed forces has reinforced the army's self-image as the guardian of national unity and stability. Civilian political institutions, by contrast, have remained comparatively weak, fragmented, and often reliant on military mediation to resolve crises. The imbalance between civil and military authority cannot be adequately explained without reference to the colonial construction of martial rule and its agrarian foundations.

The theory of martial rule, originating in colonial anxieties after 1857, thus evolved into a durable system that intertwined military service with agrarian economy and political authority in Punjab. As demonstrated by Pasha, Dewey, Tan Tai Yong, and Mazumdar, this outcome was neither accidental nor incidental but the result of a carefully engineered colonial strategy. Its ramifications extend well beyond the colonial period, continuing to shape patterns of governance, civil–military relations, and political power in contemporary South Asia. The enhanced role of the military in Punjab politics is therefore not merely a response to modern security challenges, but the culmination of a historical process in which land, loyalty, and arms were fused into a single structure of rule whose influence remains deeply embedded in the region's political landscape.